

PGTPL COVID-19 Pandemic Oral History Transcript

Interviewees: Sam Kirkhoff, Chloe Nelis, Kendall Nuyen, Alex Reeve, Caitlin Scalf, Ellie Shoultz, Lexi Spurgin

Interviewer: Jeannine Spurgin

Date: June 11, 2020

Location: Plainfield, Indiana

Abstract: This interview features a group of teenagers, ages 16-18, who are students at Plainfield High School. They give us a little perspective on how it was to be a teenager and a student during the pandemic.

JS: This is Jeannine Spurgin. We are in Plainfield, Indiana. It's June 11, around 10 pm, and I'm with a group of teenagers. We're going to talk about their experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic. I'm going to go around and everyone is going to say your name and your age.

CS: Caitlin Scalf, and I'm 16.

SK: Sam Kirkhoff, 18.

KN: Kendall Nuyen, and I'm 16.

LS: I'm Lexi Spurgin, I'm 17.

ES: I'm Ellie Shoultz, I'm 17.

CN: I'm Chloe Nelis, I'm 17.

AR: I'm Alex Reeve, I'm 17.

JS: Alright, here's the first question. When you first learned about COVID-19, what were your thoughts about it, and how have your thoughts changed since then? Caitlin?

CS: I didn't think it was going to come to the United States, but it obviously did, and it shut down everything, and I had to work the whole time, and deal with everyone, people and money. And I worked at Walmart.

JS: Were you scared you were going to get sick?

CS: Not really. I mean, there was like a little fear, but not really. I kind of just took every caution I could.

JS: Ok. Sam?

SK: Honestly, if you want my real opinion, I didn't care. And then, it came in here and screwed

everything up and screwed up my senior year, so that kinda sucked.

JS: Oh, you're a senior! How did you feel when you found out about not being able to graduate, and all that stuff? Were you more upset, or mad, or sad, or what?

SK: I was upset. Then I sort of not cared because (inaudible). Honestly, losing track of time isn't (inaudible)

JS: You lost track of time? Because of being quarantined?

SK: Not being in school for like (inaudible)

JS: Yeah, that's a good perspective...losing track of time. Kendall?

KN: I first heard about it in CHAP class, and I didn't think it was going to stretch past China, but then it did. And it kind of ruined our show choir trip, but other than that, I've kind of been chilling. I was off work for a little bit, but now I'm back and working a lot more hours than ever because a lot of people quit. So, that's kind of good for me.

JS: Lexi, what about you?

LS: Um, well, when I first heard about it, I did not care at all, because I did not think it was going to reach here.

JS: So, is this everybody: "I did not care?" Everybody? Ok.

LS: It didn't seem like a threat. And then it came here and everything went to crap. And I quit my job because of it, because it ruined the job for me. The Harry Styles concert I was going to go to got moved to next year, so I'm really upset about that.

JS: Ellie.

ES: At first I thought it was just like the flu and everyone was overreacting, but then they shut down school, and I was, like, kind of annoyed, but now, it's whatever.

JS: Were you happy or sad when they shut down school?

ES: I was kind of happy, but then, it kinda sucked, because I thought it was only going to last a couple weeks, but then it sucked, because then I didn't get to see anyone for (inaudible).

JS: That must have been hard. Chloe?

CN: My mom is a healthcare worker, so I remember people at school telling me it was just like the flu and it wasn't that big of a deal, but my mom was dealing with it, and she was telling me it definitely was NOT like the flu, and it WAS a big deal, so I was really split between thinking it was something that would just pass and something that would shake things up.

JS: So, were you scared that you were going to get it? Especially with your mom being a

healthcare worker.

CN: Um, yeah, I was definitely scared that I was going to get it. I definitely wanted to go...we'd talked about me going to go live with my dad for a little while because she's a healthcare worker...she's actually a respiratory therapist, so that's like exactly...

JS: Yes! Were you afraid she was going to get it?

CN: Yeah, I was really scared she was going to get it, especially since she smoked for so long. So, yeah, it was scary.

JS: Alex?

AR: So, I'm pretty much just like Ellie. I thought everyone was overreacting, then it, like, cancelled everything. I was kind of excited at first, and then it was scary, but not really.

JS: Yes, it was all weird at first, then it melted into BLEH, right? Did anybody lose their job because of the pandemic?

CN: I haven't lost my job, but I haven't gone back to work yet. I filed for unemployment, and I get \$554 every Monday, so I don't care.

JS: Does anyone else get that kind of money?

ALL: No.

JS: What are you doing with all that money? Are you putting it in savings?

CN: Yeah, I'm going to save a lot for college, but it's really funny that Caitlin is, like, an essential worker, and I'm making more money than her! (laughter)

JS: Oh, that's right! Caitlin, you're an essential worker, so did you ever have any time off from work?

CS: They wouldn't let you off work unless you were on this thing called LOA, leave of absence, and a lot of people had to go on LOA because their parents didn't want them working, or some people had to self-isolate to make sure any of their family members didn't get it. But, I never had to go on it. I just had to go into work, and my mom made me wear a mask before they actually started wearing it, and she was always making sure I was wearing gloves, too.

JS: Were you mad that you had to wear a mask?

CS: I mean, kind of, but you get used to it, and you don't have to wear it outside, though, when you're counting people, so that's good, because I always count people.

JS: What were the biggest challenges you guys faced being quarantined? Family? Were you lonely? Any of that? Let's start with Kendall.

KN: Family. We're never, ever, like, together, a lot.

JS: So, were you together for the quarantine?

KN: Yeah, for the most part.

JS: And how did that go?

KN: Not well. (laughter)

JS: So, you would have to say that the pandemic negatively affected your family dynamic.

KN: Yes.

LS: I got so insanely bored that I got stuck in this rut for a month, where I would do absolutely nothing. It was so bad! And because I did nothing, I couldn't sleep, because I didn't wear myself out enough, and then I'd get headaches every day. And I thought I was going to die. And then after (inaudible)

JS: Sounds like some serious drama. Ok, Ellie?

ES: My sister came home from college, so she was quarantined with us, so that was kind of crazy, because she's usually gone. She lives in South Carolina.

JS: Did you all get along?

ES: Yeah, for the most part. We always kind of separated ourselves and then kind of came together at night because we couldn't handle it if we were all together all day. Other than that, it was kind of boring.

JS: Chloe?

CN: I was not a really big fan of e-learning, because I like school a lot. And it's like my whole personality is that I like school and I'm smart, so I didn't have anything to do, because e-learning was very easy for me, and I didn't have any tests to excessively study for. So, yeah, I was really bored, because I like school a lot.

JS: How about being stuck with your family?

CN: Well, like I said, my mom is an essential worker, and so she was at work every day. And I just have a sister, so we were okay together; I'm with my sister a lot, so...

JS: Alex?

AR: So, basically, I was bored all the time. And I kind of didn't like that I couldn't do the things that I wanted to do, like I go to the movies a lot, and I can't do that anymore.

JS: Did you watch a lot of movies while you were at home?

AR: No.

JS: No? Well, then, that segues into the next question: what DID you guys do to entertain yourselves?

AR: Well, I just played video games or slept.

CN: I watched a lot of Netflix series. I watched *The Tiger King*. It was really good.

ES: I slept and I worked out a lot. And then I gave up on that. And then I got another job as a nanny, so then that gave me something to do.

JS: Alright. Lexi, what did you do?

LS: I just sat on my phone a lot. And then I got a Nintendo Switch, and then played that a lot. And then I started exercising every morning a lot, I would go on walks and (inaudible).

JS: Kendall?

KN: I watched a lot of TV, and I started drawing a bit, but like, I drew one thing, and then gave up. (laughter) It was a good drawing, though!

JS: I'm sure it was! Caitlin?

CS: I went to the park a lot, and went on a lot of walks, and learned how to paint.

JS: Sam, what did you do?

SK: I worked out, I worked, and I hung out with my friends.

JS: You hung out with your friends?

SK: Yeah, they didn't enforce anything, so...

JS: Oh really? Did you wear masks when you hung out with your friends?

SK: No.

JS: Alright. Ok, self-isolation, flattening the curve, have been two key ideas that have emerged during the pandemic. How have you, your family, friends and community responded to requests to self-isolate and flatten the curve? How have you responded, Caitlin?

CS: I would hang out with my friends at the park, but like, I didn't go to anyone's house, because I wasn't allowed to. And then later, in April, I was allowed to actually hang out with people. And then, when May started, I could actually go to people's houses and hang out, and things were opening back up. But, since I worked at Walmart, I didn't want to hang out with too many people just in case I got something.

JS: Did you wear a mask because of that, more often than not?

CS: Yeah, I had to (inaudible)

JS: So, you didn't just wear a mask at work, you actually wore a mask when you went to the store and stuff?

CS: Yeah, but out in the park I didn't wear a mask.

JS: (to Sam) I think I know what you're going to say, but go ahead!

SK: I mean, I would still go over to people's houses, it just depended on who would let me over. (laughter) Not everyone did, because most people were busy (inaudible). But, for the self-isolation, my family (inaudible) too much, things aren't open (inaudible)...

JS: Did you wear a mask when you went out?

SK: No.

JS: Did your family?

SK: My mom did when she went to get her hair done.

JS: Ok. Kendall?

KN: I didn't go out much, but I had people over to my house.

JS: Did you wear masks?

KN: No, but when we hung out, we mainly hung out outside with a lot of (inaudible).

JS: How about your family - did they wear masks?

KN: Yeah, my dad would wear one at work, and my mom wore one when she went to (inaudible). A lot of her stuff got cancelled. She's in a private club that meets all the time, but they didn't cancel it.

JS: How many people were in the club?

KN: At a time? They spaced it out so that there were (inaudible), but I don't know how well it worked out.

JS: Do you know of any of them that got sick?

KN: I don't know if my mom actually had it, but she got sick a little bit.

JS: So, she never got tested?

KN: She did, and I think it was positive for it, but by the time she got home, she wasn't sick anymore. My dad got tested too, but he tested negative for it after she tested positive.

JS: Did you get tested?

KN: No.

JS: Lexi.

LS: I stayed home for a while and didn't really hang out with anybody. And then, I would wear a mask in the stores (inaudible). Just the basic stuff.

JS: Ellie?

ES: At first, I took it seriously and was, like, isolating and stuff and didn't hang out with anyone. And then after a month, everyone just kind of gave up.

JS: Yeah, it did seem that way.

ES: I just started hanging out with people.

JS: Did you wear masks, or did your family wear masks?

ES: My mom did, but no one else. I have to wear one at work when I work at the daycare.

CN: I was really nervous about, like, giving it to older people, so I didn't go to anyone's house, because I was scared that if I had it and I was at someone's house and gave it to their parents. So, I didn't hang out with anyone for a while. I didn't see my boyfriend for, like, a week and a half. And then, I started seeing my boyfriend because he lives (inaudible) from me, but I didn't see my friends for a lot longer than a lot of people did, because I was taking it really seriously. I was so terrified of giving it to some parents and feeling horrible about it. I started hanging out around the middle of May.

JS: Alex?

AR: So, at first, I was basically staying in my room all the time, sleeping. And then, whenever I had to leave, I would wear a mask, and I would sanitize all the time. But then, now, I just kind of, I stopped all that.

JS: Your family, too?

AR: My family never really did it. Like, for a little bit, then...

JS: Is there anything that any of you would like to say that, somebody a hundred years from now might find interesting about Plainfield during the pandemic?

LS: I want them to know that if they have a hard time, they can just look back in their history

books to 2020, and realize it's really not that bad. Because what did we have? We had corona, we had murder hornets, we had gypsy moths, we had the police brutality, a civil rights movement. Like that was needed? Why did we have to do that again? 2020 sucks, and my concert was cancelled...

JS: It's not that bad! You know what? Take lemons, make lemonade. Alright, you guys, thank you very much!